

The Mobile Processing Unit is not considered the final solution to the problem of market access for farmers, but it will at least allow farmers the opportunity to sell their products legally and learn what the potential market demand is for those products.

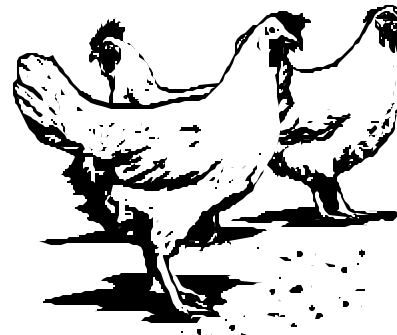
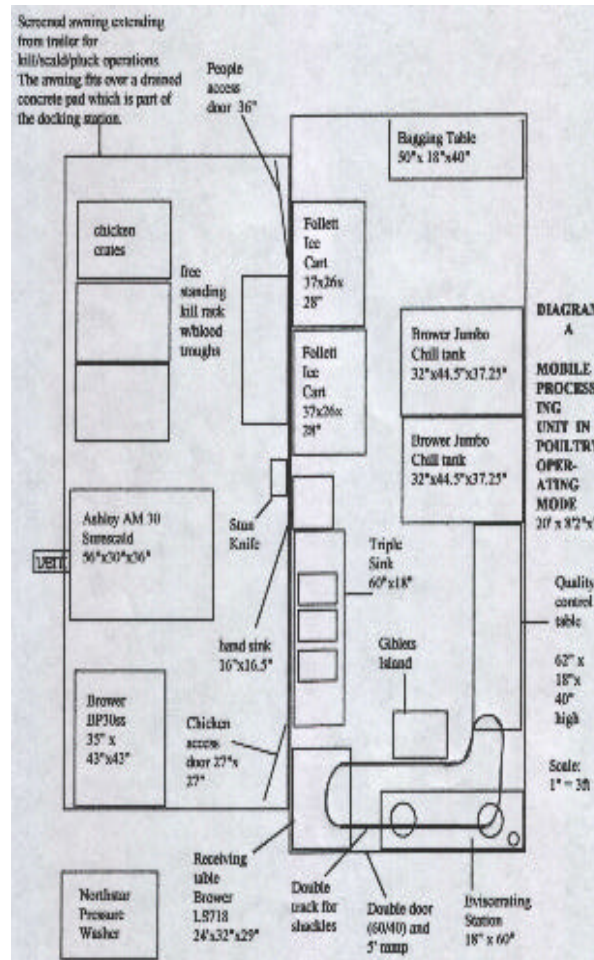
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### What Does It Look Like?



## **Mobile Processing Unit (MPU) For Small Livestock Species in Kentucky**

The Mobile Processing Unit (MPU) has been developed for use in Kentucky for the purpose of processing small livestock. This brochure should help answer many of the questions regarding the MPU, its purpose, current state of development and future use. The partners in this venture are The Kentucky Department of Agriculture, the Southern SARE program, Partners for Family Farms, Heifer Project International, Kentucky State University, the Kentucky Health Department, Berea College, The Commodity Growers Cooperative, Morehead State University and numerous independent farmers. Larry Singleton of Doddy Trailer Sales and J. O. Johnson of Design Fabrication and Services constructed the trailer.

### Why a Mobile Facility?

The idea began with a small group of people who wanted to be able to legally sell specialty poultry produced and processed on their farms. Kentucky has no federally inspected processing facilities that will accept poultry from independent producers and the state health department did not want any processed birds sold that were not federally inspected. This left no legal means for the farmers to direct market their poultry. There was very little interest in developing an inspected stationary plant because no one wanted to make a large investment in a relatively untested market. At the same time it was impossible to test the market without a legal product to sell. The idea of an approved mobile facility seemed to be an appropriate first approach to solving the problem. A state approved mobile facility will allow limited numbers of small livestock to be legally processed in close proximity to the farms raising those livestock. The mobile processing unit will allow farmers to take advantage of, as well as test, the small but growing niche market for pastured poultry, rabbits and aquaculture. While this niche market is somewhat limited it may provide profitable marketing opportunities for small farmers and satisfy a growing number of consumers.

### **Current Status of the MPU**

The construction phase of the MPU is basically over. A great deal of time and \$70,000 has been spent in building the MPU. This includes the development of one docking station (a site where the MPU can be hooked up and used), which has been built at Kentucky State University.

The paperwork phase of the MPU is still in process. Any new idea generates a new level of paperwork and this idea is no different, especially since it deals with food, and poultry in particular. From the very beginning of this process all of the stakeholders in the issue were brought to the table. This includes farmers, the health department, numerous universities and the USDA Food Safety Inspection Service. All of these entities continue to assist us as we assemble the various regulatory documents required. The State Health Department has established a list of regulations for small-scale poultry processing in the state. A HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) plan will be established and it will be turned over to the State Health Department. In addition written Standard Operation Procedures (SOP), Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) will be submitted. Various legal documents need to be prepared and insurance considerations must be taken into account as well. Once all the plans are approved and legal documents are finished, a permit for operation will be issued. A well trained crew should be able to process 400-500 birds in an 8-hour day with this facility. MPU regulatory procedures for aquaculture are currently under investigation. MPA regulatory procedures for rabbits have not begun at this time.

### **Requirements to Use MPU**

Once all the regulatory tasks are finished, training will take place to qualify people to use the MPU. In order to use the unit, an operator must complete a training program under the direction of Poultry Science, Meat Science or other professionals from the University of Kentucky, depending on species to be processed. In addition the unit must be set up at an approved docking station. The docking station must have a concrete pad, potable water supply, electric connections, composting station and easy access to a municipal sewer supply or a septic tank system with a grease trap. The cost of establishing a docking station for the MPU is estimated at \$4000-\$6000. Specifications for the docking station are still under development and differing specifications may be applied to different species or locations.

Trained operators of the MPU will be able to rent the facility for a fee and cleaning deposit. They will also be required to sign a user agreement specifying liability issues and responsibilities for operation. The MPU is a 20 ft. gooseneck trailer. It will be housed at Kentucky State University and may be picked up with a properly equipped pick-up truck.

### **Who Owns the MPU?**

Heifer Project International is the actual owner of the MPU, but the use of the unit will be guided by a management team consisting of representatives from the organizations responsible for the development of the unit.

### **When Will the First Training Take Place?**

Training cannot actually take place until after a permit has been issued and all the legal documents are ready. This process has taken longer than we anticipated due to the many regulations and legal aspects that are involved in food safety. We hope to have our first training in late spring of 2001.

### **When Will It Actually Be Available for Use?**

It is anticipated that it will take another few months after the initial training before the MPU will actually be available for use. In addition to the paperwork mentioned earlier, potential operators of the MPU will need to be trained and develop docking stations for use of the MPU. With this in mind, it is very likely that the MPU will not actually be used for commercial production until the 2001 growing season.

### **What Else?**

Final products resulting from MPU use will be labeled accordingly and can be picked up directly by the consumer at the processing site or can be shipped under proper refrigeration. Two small bumper hitch trailers with dual chest freezers and a small generator have been built to assist with the storage/transportation of finished product. These trailers will be available from the University of Kentucky and Berea College.